

# Report pushes 25% tuition hike

By Joe Howell -  
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TORONTO (CUP) – “It’s a recession when your neighbour loses his job; it’s a depression when you lose yours,” U.S. President Truman once quipped. So what’s it called when you can’t afford the education you need to get that job in the first place?

Massive tuition fee increases will likely be necessary over the next few years, cautions an educational think tank, or universities will have to start slashing programs and services.

A hike of 25 per cent would generate \$1 to \$2 billion dollars, necessary money that won’t be coming from anywhere else.

A recent report by the non-profit Educational Policy Institute shows that while the recent recession has been tightening belts and lightening wallets everywhere, post-secondary education has not even begun to feel the pain.

Many universities can also expect hiring freezes, slashed library spending, fewer scholarships, deferred maintenance, and bigger class sizes in the years to come, according to a just-released study.

Titled “On the Brink: How the Recession of 2009 Will Affect Post-Secondary Education,” it paints a grim picture of the future of PSE in Canada, but it also suggests

steps forward.

The report suggests universities and colleges will be battered by converging circumstances, including weakened endowments, changing demographics, increased enrolment pressure, increased operating costs, and lessened government spending on PSE.

Co-author Ryan Dunn says that the 25 per cent number was part prediction and part prescription, and that he does not think universities should choose to cut services instead.

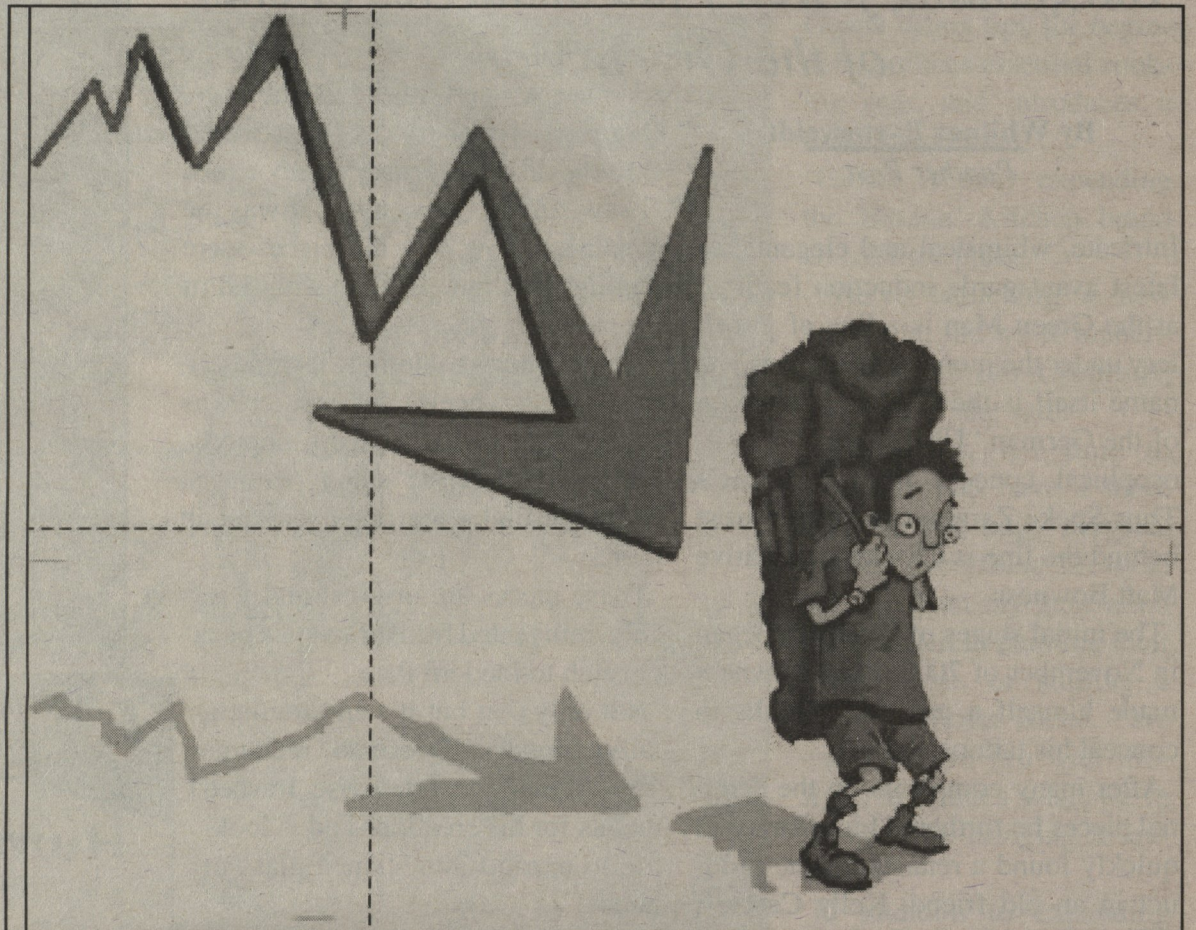
“We could get to that point . . . people can’t be afraid to touch this politically hot issue. Quality must be maintained, but it costs.”

John Milloy, Ontario’s minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, told the *Globe and Mail* that it “is unfortunate if this has generated fear,” adding that increases coming after 2010 would not prevent qualified students from accessing PSE due to financial need.

The University of Toronto assured the *Globe* that impending fee increases would be in the “single digits,” but Dunn says the potential 25 per cent increase would happen “over three years.”

“When you do the math, you’re down to single digits,” said Dunn.

Trevor Mayoh, President of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, said while there are “aspects of the report we agree with,” the suggested fee hike is “a little bit silly.”



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“We’re in a recession; this isn’t the time to raise tuition,” said Mayoh. “We need to start focusing on those who can’t access post-secondary education at current [price] levels.”

Mayoh takes issue with the report’s assertion that average family incomes have increased, and can thus accommodate tuition increase. He suggests Ontario’s provincial government should

actually ramp up PSE funding, to ensure the region is ready for the post-recession “creative economy.”

“There is money in the system that could be re-directed. It’s about being more efficient,” said Mayoh.

Dunn seems to agree. He says governments have to make sure they give institutions the “resources to handle the influx” of students, and that increased PSE par-

ticipation rates would “allow us to move from more of a manufacturing economy to whatever comes next.”

He predicts that many who lost their job in the recession will head back to college for two-year programs.

Zach Churchill, National Director of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, said in a press release that “it is important not to have a knee-jerk reaction to the report.”

He warned that decision-makers might “pick only the ideas they want to hear, and ignore the essence of EPI’s solutions, which is that a considered, holistic approach is needed to fix the problems our post-secondary education system will likely encounter.”